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CHINA EASES GRIP, ALIBABA SPLITS

Chinese e-commerce conglomerate Alibaba Group plans to overhaul its sprawling $237-billion empire by splitting into six business verticals as it looks to react faster to market changes and increase value

The six units are Cloud Intelligence Group, Taobao Tmall Commerce Group, Local Services Group, Cainiao Smart Logistics Group, Global Digital Commerce Group and Digital Media and Entertainment Group

Each unit will have a CEO as well as a board of directors and will retain the flexibility to raise outside capital and seek initial public offering, except for Taobao Tmall Business Group that handles China commerce, which will stay wholly owned by Alibaba Group

The revamp comes a day after its founder Jack Ma returned home ending a year-long stay abroad and when China is easing its regulatory crackdown on private firms | P15

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Ukraine students to get 2 attempts to clear MBBS: SC

Govt had offered them one shot at the final exams following a panel's recommendation

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

IN a major relief to Indian medical students who were forced to return from Ukraine, China and the Philippines due to war and Covid-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed them to clear their final examination in two attempts, without enrolling in any medical college in India.

This is applicable to MBBS students who returned to India in their penultimate year of studies and completed the course through online mode. The examination will be in line with the existing National Medical Council (NMC) syllabus and guidelines, a bench of judges B R Gavai and Vikram Nath said.

The bench was hearing a batch of pleas filed by students who had to leave their studies mid-way and return to India.

Earlier, the Centre had told the SC that it was ready to offer penultimate year students one chance to clear the final exams (both theory and practical) but the court modified it to two, considering the special circumstances of the case.

The Centre said the theory exam would be held centrally on the pattern of Indian MBBS exam, while the practical exam would be conducted by designated government medical colleges. The students will also have to complete two years of compulsory rotatory internship, of which the first year will be free and the second year paid as decided by the NMC.

The SC had in December 2022 asked the Centre to find a solution to the 'humane problem' faced by the medical students. "We are sure that the Union of India will give due importance to our suggestion and find out a solution for these students, who are undisputedly an asset to the nation and, particularly, when there is a dearth of doctors in the country," it had said.

Following the suggestion, the government formed a committee of experts. The Centre submitted its recommendation to the Supreme Court via an affidavit, which the court accepted on Tuesday with one modification in favour of the students.

The affidavit also made it clear that the relaxation in rules is only for the present matter and will not be treated as a precedent for issues that may arise in the future.

US watching Rahul case; internal matter, says govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE United States is watching Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's case in courts, US Department of State spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

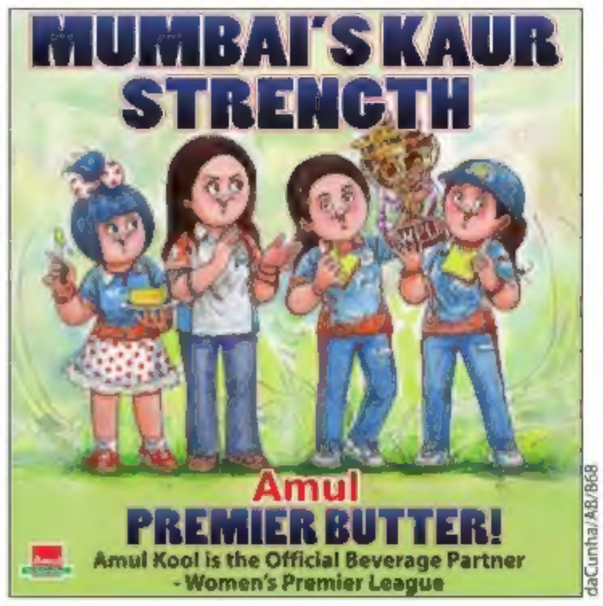
"The US engages with the Indian government on a shared commitment to democratic values, including freedom of expression. Respect for the rule of law and judicial independence is a cornerstone of any democracy, and we're watching Rahul Gandhi case," Patel said in a briefing while responding to a question regarding Rahul's conviction in a defamation case and disqualification from Parliament.

On being asked whether the US was engaging with India or Rahul, he said, "I don't have any specific engagements to read out" though it is normal "to engage with members of opposition parties in any country where we have bilateral relationships".

A BJP lawmaker in Gujarat had sued Rahul for defamation for his Modi surname slur in 2019.

However, Union I&B Minister Anurag Thakur dismissed the US remarks at a media event, saying the official had made a generic statement.

"It is our internal matter. No one is above the Supreme Court. There are judicial and constitutional institutions. They (the US) have made a generic statement," he said.



Siddu to contest from Kolar too

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

LEADER of Opposition Siddaramaiah on Tuesday announced he would contest the Assembly elections from Kolar constituency also.

Although the Congress has announced his candidature for Varuna, he admitted that there was immense pressure from the people of Kolar, so he had decided to contest from two seats.

"This is my last election. I had a wish of contesting from my native Varuna constituency and also from Kolar. I became CM after winning from Varuna. My son Yathindra has announced he will not contest elections this time," he said.

Siddaramaiah said he had convened a meeting of party leaders from Kolar and also other constituencies on March 31 in view of Rahul Gandhi kick-starting the poll campaign from Kolar.

EPS AT THE HELM OF AIADMK

AIADMK on Tuesday elevated Edappadi K Palaniswami as its general secretary after O Panneerselvam lost one more legal battle against his expulsion | P7

Cong neta among 3 held for protest at BSY's house

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga

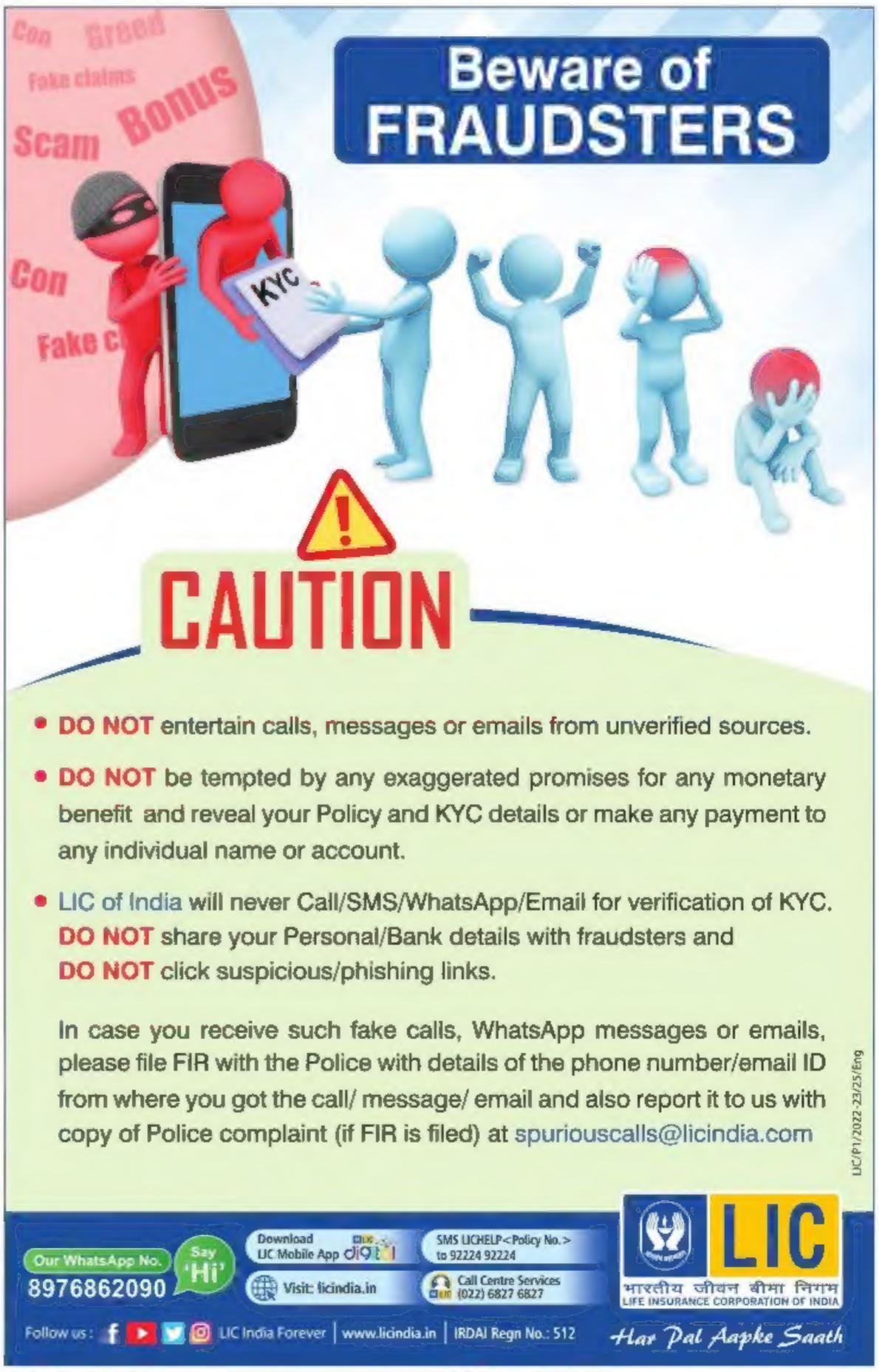
THE police on Tuesday registered four FIRs and arrested three persons for throwing stones at former chief minister BS Yediyurappa's house at Shikaripura during a protest on Monday by members of the Banjara community over internal reservation for SCs.

Sources said local Congress leader Raghavendra Naik was among the arrested. Meanwhile, Banjaras blocked the Shivamogga-Shikaripura highway near Kunchenahalli on Tuesday demanding that the state government withdraw its decision on internal reservation. Traffic on the highway was disrupted for some time when the protesters burnt coconut fronds there.

Security has been tightened around Yediyurappa's house after Monday's protest. Home Minister Araga Jnanendra, who visited Yediyurappa's house, termed Monday's incident unfortunate and said it happened due to misunderstanding and provocation by some people. "Yediyurappa has special affection for Banjaras. He has fulfilled many of their demands. Yediyurappa played a big role in the development of Sooragondanakoppa, the birthplace of Sant Seva Lal. But, some protesters threw stones at Yediyurappa's house on Monday. Yediyurappa had requested not to take action against the protesters and said he would speak to the community leaders. But, I am pained by the attack on policemen during the protest. People took law into their hands," Jnanendra told reporters.

Members of the Banjara community block Shivamogga-Shikaripura highway near Kunchenahalli on Tuesday | EXPRESS

He alleged that some people, who had four to five cases against them in the past, were involved in the clash and provoked the protesters. SP Mithun Kumar G K confirmed that three persons had been arrested in connection with Monday's violence.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